

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

PREPARED BY DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION, NAILAH MARITZA MOONSAMMY

I am continually struck by the extent to which the beauty and legacy of marginalized peoples are silenced and/or overlooked. My desire to work at a Quaker school is rooted in the historical legacy and tradition of Quaker activism, which emphasizes the belief that uplifting each person's inner light requires both accountability and a collective responsibility to honor and protect it. Black History Month serves as an important reminder of the enduring legacy of Black and African American resilience, creativity, intelligence, stamina, and the profound love required not only to persevere, but to truly thrive. My Black identity has shown me the importance of standing in my truth, cultivating the emotional awareness to stay grounded, and advocating for and affirming the dignity, human rights, and well-being of all people. Happy Black History Month!

## STUDENT VOICES



**BEARING WITNESS:**  
*A cornerstone of Quaker practice, which means to actively testify one's belief*

### Morgan Franklin, Grade 5

**I stand out because I am not a follower.** I like to be myself and make my own choices. Learning about Black history and Black culture has taught me to believe in myself and always want the best for my future. It shows me that I can work hard, be proud of who I am, and accomplish my goals, even when things are challenging.

I love my hair because it is delicate, special, and unique, just like me. I can wear it naturally, in braids, twists, or many other styles. My hair lets me express who I am and how I feel. Wearing my hair makes me feel confident and proud of my culture.

I admire Beyoncé because I love her songs and her identity. She is not afraid to speak her mind and stand up for what she believes in. She also has a beautiful family, and she sends positive messages to people all over the world. In one of her songs, she says that she doesn't expect anyone to love her if they don't love themselves. When I hear those lyrics, they help me during hard times. If I feel disappointed or face obstacles, that message cheers me up and reminds me not to be afraid of what others think or say.

She also inspires me because she gives back to her community. She donates dresses to charities and helps people in need. She tries her hardest to make the world a better place and to set a good example, not only for her family but also for her fans. Because of her, I want to be confident, kind, and always help others whenever I can.



**WALKING IN THE LIGHT TOGETHER:**  
*The Quaker tradition of living in community with one another*

### Taylor Price '26

**Every weeknight at 7:00 PM, I have a serious appointment in my living room.** I stake my claim on my favorite chair, the lighting hits just right, and I pretend I'm on stage with the late, great Alex Trebek. But my favorite part of *Jeopardy!* isn't showing off what I know; it's the thrill of what I *don't* know.

I call it reverse epistemology, which is just a fancy way of saying I love learning new things. In a world that often pressures us to look smart and polished, to have all the answers, there is a huge sense of relief and joy in simply "emptying the cup." When we stop worrying about appearing intelligent, we actually make space to become more understanding.

I've been thinking about this "empty cup" mindset specifically as we celebrate Black History Month. Too often, we treat Black history like a category we have already cleared, sticking to the same few famous figures and stories we were taught. But this month is an invitation to realize how much of the board is still left uncovered. It is a chance to look past the usual stories and discover the incredible breadth of Black history that doesn't always make it into the standard textbooks. It's about finding the hidden inventors behind our modern conveniences and the profound legacy of Black joy that thrives alongside resilience. For me, this is about realizing that the world is so much bigger, richer, and more colorful than my own little bubble.

So, this February, I'm challenging myself to channel that 7:00 PM energy all day long. I'm going to worry less about looking the part and more about listening and celebrating the stories I haven't heard yet. I hope you'll join me in emptying your cup; you might be delighted by what fills it up.

## Student Interview

### Elijah Fuller '29 and Ms. Camille S. Edwards



**As Black History Month begins in early February**, a member of the FA faculty who is of both African American and Caribbean background, our own Director of Student Affairs, was interviewed about her culture and the importance of Black culture in shaping her path, and self-identity.

For Camille, taking care of young people has been dear to her since childhood. Growing up with a Trinidadian mother who immigrated to the U.S. at 14, she (Ms. Edwards) saw the women in her life as powerful yet graceful people. She believes that one of her responsibilities, not just as Director of Student Affairs but also as a woman of color, is to care for women and support her community. A major role model of hers is Ntozake Shange, whose play *For Colored Girls* has been deeply influential in shaping who she is today. Theater as a whole changed her life through the works of many artists, including George Morrison, Langston Hughes, and James Baldwin.

For Ms. Edwards, culture has shaped the paths she has taken and the values she shares with us at FA. She grew up learning traditional Trini recipes, listening to cultural music, and eating a variety of foods. It felt as though she was growing up in a Caribbean household, showing how culture can thrive regardless of environment.

Ms. Edwards has always believed in self-worth and encourages students to write their own stories. She feels it is her responsibility to ensure that the youth at Friends Academy are supported to be their very best and not limit themselves, because self-doubt can become the only real obstacle. Her message to students is: "If a person has decided they are unworthy or incapable, those that oppose you or look down on you, having nothing else to do, because you yourself could stop or thwart your own potential."

## Important Dates and Upcoming Events

- **2/15-2/16** MAHA SHIVARATRI
- **2/17** CHINESE AND LUNAR NEW YEAR
- **2/17** RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS DAY
- **2/17-3/19** RAMADAN
- **2/18-2/20** TIBETAN NEW YEAR
- **2/18** ASH WEDNESDAY
- **2/24** CHINESE AND LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION
- **2/26** NATIONAL WOMEN IN SPORTS ASSEMBLY
- **2/28** HBCU / DIVINE 9 HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE
- **3/13** THE DIVERSITY GRANT FUND DINNER
  - AP ART EXHIBITION
  - ORIGINAL WORKS

## EQUALITY: The Quaker Tradition of advocating for social justice

### Jonathan Ortiz '28



**Thurgood Marshall was born on July 2, 1908**, and died on January 24, 1993. In 1922, he attended a segregated high school for Black students. Unlike Baltimore's all-white schools, it had no library, gym, or cafeteria. It was so overcrowded that half the students attended in the morning and the other half in the afternoon.

His inspiration for law came from his father, William Marshall. His father often discussed legal cases and recent court proceedings at home. He also worked as a waiter, and his mother was a teacher. At the age of 14, Thurgood began attending court proceedings and observing how they were conducted. He worked hard in school with the goal of becoming an attorney. He ranked among the top three students in his class and graduated a year early.

Thurgood Marshall's civil rights legacy has been widely remembered and honored. In 1980, the University of Maryland named its new library after him, and his statue stands in front of the Baltimore courthouse. Thurgood once said, "I wish I could just say racism and prejudice were only distant memories," during a 1992 Liberty Medal speech at the National Constitution Center.

#### Fun Facts:

- During his career, Thurgood argued 32 cases before the Supreme Court and won 29 of them.
- He worked in the legal field for 24 years.
- In second grade, Thurgood changed his name from Thoroughgood to Thurgood because he was tired of writing such a long name.
- His first major court case came in 1933, when he successfully sued the University of Maryland to admit an African American Amherst University graduate named Donald Gaines Murray.
- When Thurgood was young, his family nicknamed him "Goody."

